CLAIMS

I claim:

[c1]   1.   Apparatus utilizing a data processor for determining which of a number of rental properties are both available and suited to the needs of a typically short-term renter of real property comprising:

a.   a rental property database for storing a plurality of variable attributes related to a typically large number of rental properties typically rented for a short term to enable rapid searching and retrieval of available properties having certain desired attributes;

b.   a single master search database table indexed in correspondence with the nature of said attributes and having a plurality of periodically updated fields in which all of the information associated with and necessary for selecting said attributes is stored with use of said data processor, and from which it can be retrieved;

c.   means for inputting to said table a search query of certain variable attributes to search a plurality of rental properties;

d.   means for comparing the attributes of each said property in said table with the inputted search query; and

e.   means for displaying all properties in said table that match said search query.

[c2]   2.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, including means for supplying said information by a plurality of files comprised of said variable attributes.

[c3]   3.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, wherein said fields are comprised of:

a)   a property identification field;

b)   a startday field representing the day of the year that represents the arrival date;

c)   a freedays field that represents how many consecutive days that can be rented are available from the date in the startday field;

d)   a modulus field representing multiples of the number of days rented allowed;

e)   a mindays field that represents the minimum number of days that a rental property can be rented; and

f)   a plurality of multiple day(n) fields where n represents the number of days that are to be rented.

[c4]   4.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, wherein said single master search database table is arranged such that it can be searched by various search fields, said search fields comprising:

a)   type of activity;

b)   destination by state;

c)   start date; and

d)   length of stay.

[c5]   5.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, including means enabling the search results to be narrowed according to location.

[c6]   6.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, including means enabling the search results to be narrowed according to number of bedrooms.

[c7]   7.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, including means enabling the search results to be narrowed according to price.

[c8]   8.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 1, including means responsive to a query directed to said single indexed master search table for extracting from said single indexed master search table the identity of a selected number of properties, which are both available and suited to said needs, onto a results screen.

[c9]   9.   An apparatus, as claimed in claim 8, wherein said results screen includes a hyperlink to each of said properties that will direct a user to a record for said properties, which match said needs.

[c10] 10. A method comprising the steps of

    a. compiling a single indexed master search database table having fields including:

        i) a property id field that identifies the property;

        ii) a start day field that represents the arrival date;

        iii) a freedays field that represents how many consecutive days that can be rented are available from the arrival date forward and setting the freedays field to zero if the property cannot be rented on the arrival date;

        iv) a modulus field that represents the multiples of days that the property can be rented;

        v) a mindays field that represents the minimum number of days that the property can be rented;

        vi) an unlimited number of day(n) fields where n represents the number of days that are to be rented; and

        vii) a total rent value that represents the rent to be paid calculated by the n in each day(n) field; and

    b. extracting from said single indexed master search database table the identity of a selected number of properties.

[c11] 11. The method of creating said single indexed master search database table as described in claim 10, wherein said table can be searched by various search fields, said search fields comprising:

    a) type of activity;

    b) destination by state;

    c) start date;

    d) price; and

    e) length of stay.

[c12] 12. The method of claim 10, wherein step (a) includes predetermining for each of the said real properties the presence or absence of selected amenities such as, but not limited to, the

number of bedrooms, hot tub, swimming pool, telephone, and air conditioning, step (b) includes fields representative of all the information obtained in step (a) related to said selected amenities and step (b) includes extracting from said single indexed master search database table, the identity of all properties which suit said availability and suitability needs including said selected amenities.